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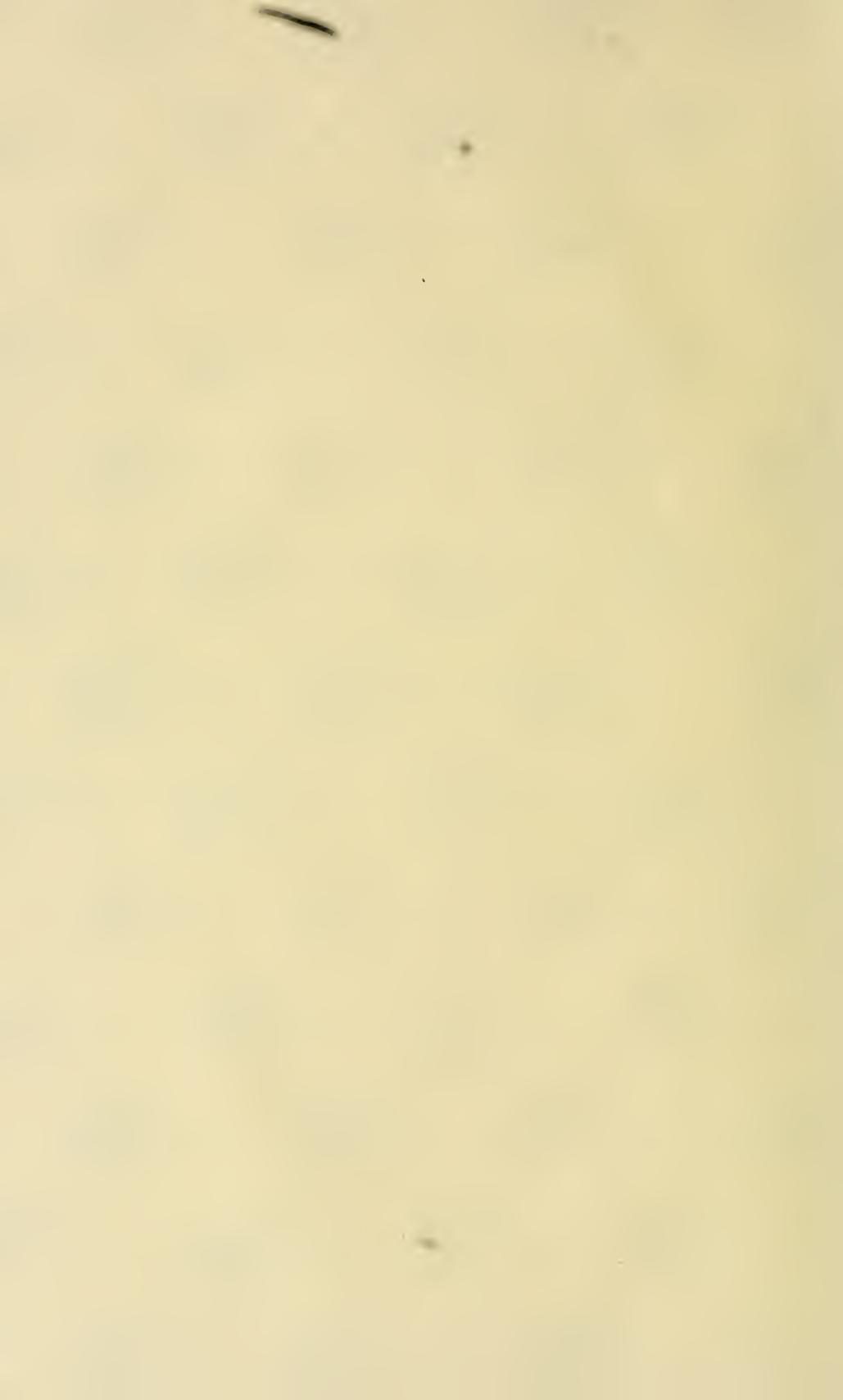
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ADDRESS TO THE NEW GENERATION.

Washington and Lincoln.

FEBRUARY 12 AND 22, 1888.

BY

DAVID SWING,

PASTOR OF CENTRAL CHURCH, CHICAGO.



PUBLISHED BY W. A. TALCOTT,

OF ROCKFORD, ILL.



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[PUBLISHER'S NOTE.]

ROCKFORD, ILL., February 22, 1888.

DEAR FRIEND,—Upon reading this address, I felt, as a business man and citizen, a very strong desire to have it read by as many as possible of the young women and young men of our country,—those who are still in schools and colleges, but who must soon take up and discharge the duties and responsibilities of home life and citizenship,—believing that it would be to them a help and an inspiration, valuable and lasting. Acting upon this desire, I asked for, and obtained, permission to publish it.

To all who may receive a copy, I make this request, that you will aid in its mission of usefulness by having it read as widely as possible. This can be secured by public reading at gatherings of Students, Literary Clubs and Societies, and at Church prayer-meetings, sociables, Christian Endeavor Society gatherings, and other social meetings.

I shall be glad to furnish copies, upon request.

Very truly yours,

WILLIAM A. TALCOTT.



Washington and Lincoln.

As our Nation grows older, and adds to its moral worth as rapidly as it adds to its years, its memorial days will become more significant, and no statesman or editor or clergyman will pass unconsciously such graves as those of Washington or Lincoln. The Greeks and Latins celebrated the death-days of their great men because greatness did not reach its climax at the cradle, but nearer the tomb. Our country, in regarding the birthdays of its distinguished sons, has in heart the same feelings which the classics cherished, and uses the joy and beauty of the cradle only as an emblem of the subsequent splendor of life. Any day taken from that career which ended in 1799, the day in October when Cornwallis surrendered to Washington, would answer as well as the day in February for a trumpet call to awaken an unequalled memory. Be the hour that of cradle or inauguration or farewell address or grave, it recalls the one great historic fact. The American habit of taking up the birthday as an emblem of the whole page or volume in history is well, for there the first smile of life is seen, and the cradle is less sad than the sepulchre.

This smallest month in the year is ornamented by the two greatest birthdays recorded upon our continent—those of Washington and Lincoln. February 12 will by degrees become the associate in love and memory of February 22, and both will advance in honor with the advance of public patriotism

and culture. Only ten years lay between the death of Washington and the birth of Abraham Lincoln. In that little interregnum the people ruled just as they do now when both kings have long been absent from the land they loved. But we should all see to it that the absence is only that of the material form, not that of the soul. The bookmaker, the journalist, the politician, the preacher, the poet, and the painter should carry onward the spirit of these men, and make them to be the same moral forces in the morrow they were in the yesterday. What the old saints are to Christianity these two patriots are to our country. Take from beneath our churches the Christ and the Saints Paul and John, and although each truth of a natural religion would remain, what a coldness would be felt in its walls! How hearts would freeze at the altars! So our Nation does not repose upon early abstract ideas, but also upon the warm hearts which once beat along the Potomac and in the prairies of Illinois.

Society is moved not simply by its truths, but also by its attachments, and doubly fortunate and successful is it when its attachments bind it to the best truths. Men love their country, right or wrong; but fortunate is our Nation in that its great heroic characters were in perfect harmony with the most refined light, and thus truth and sentiment are in full partnership. There have been States which have had to apologize for the defects of their heroes—their Cæsars or Napoleons or Georges—their emperors or queens or czars: but fortunate was this February in those two cradles over which attachment and philosophy join in unusual accord. Love sees nothing that need be forgiven. Patriotism and reason meet over these birthdays, and, willing to love country, right or wrong, men may love it all the more in this unsullied memory of right.

Next to the saints of religion must be ranked in all our minds these saints of our country ; because our Nation asks not for political theory only, but for a worship, a friendship that can conquer and hope like the faith of the Christian. When an enemy rises up against this Republic it must always find not a mere soulless corporation, but a passion, a sentiment which will pluck up trees by the root and toss mountains into the sea. A mother defends her child not only because of right and principle, but also because of her affection. Thus great, pure leaders, like those of historic memory, enlarge political philosophy into devotion. It helped our nation in its dark days of 1770 and 1861, that its two leaders were so worthy of admiration. The soldiers of Valley Forge saw in their general a lofty character for whom they could endure privations, in whom they could trust. When they were cold and hungry and homesick they were still inspired by the merit of their commander. He had separated himself from his wealth and its peace to be a soldier against the greatest power upon earth ; the troops saw that moral worth, and were cheered by the vision when all other scenes were darkened. When Baron Steuben, an ardent volunteer from the German army, saw the troops at Valley Forge, their want of all the comforts of life, he wondered what held the soldiers so firmly to their post of duty. It was a moral power that held them—the hope of a free nation and faith in their chieftain. In Philadelphia the British army, from the highest to the humblest, was spending in carousal the winter months which the colonial troops were spending in all forms of discomfort. One British officer kept a gambling house in which the common soldiers were robbed of their gold. Thus was the British army a military machine, while the American army was a band of men with a soul in it—an army of 6,000 friends of

freedom and of Washington. Washington's dining-room of logs, in which banqueting hall that could be duplicated for \$50, there was simple food and no carousal, became an emblem of the kind of leader the file was trusting and following.

This scene was repeated in the war of the secession. Whatever the hardships of the soldiers in that long and awful war, the troops could always think of Abraham Lincoln as being in full sympathy with them, as knowing what labor and privation were, and as being willing to die, if need be, for the welfare of the country. The fame of other men arose and fell, but Mr. Lincoln's shone with a steady beam, however dark the night. All the simplicity and honesty of his character, the hardships of his early life, added to the impressiveness of his name. His history made him the basis of songs and of a deep admiration.

It is wonderful that two such men, so similar, so grand in intellect and morals, came to our Nation in its hour of greatest need. The need did not create them; it simply found them. George Washington was just as honest and noble when he was twenty, and twenty years before the independence, as he was in the revolution. When discontent about rank and pay sprang up in the Indian war, Major Washington, then twenty-two, said he should as soon serve as a private as serve as an officer, and for small pay as for large pay; that he would remain with his regiment on the Ohio under any possible arrangement. Thus the subsequent revolution did not make Washington; it only found him.

Thus came Abraham Lincoln into our country, not created by the war of the rebellion, but created previously in the mysterious laboratory of nature. He was simple in life, clear in his views of right and duty, firm in his will long before the flag of war was unfurled. Circumstances ought to have made

a hero and patriot out of James Buchanan, but they were unequal to the large task ; they ought to have fashioned a leader out of Stephen A. Douglas, but they could not teach him the whole of the right as to territories where no slave had ever been. Circumstances did not fit Wendell Phillips nor Mr. Garrison for the highest office, for neither of them could have carried that heart of justice towards the South which the times required. Many men came near being worthy, but some valuable element seemed wanting until this singular character was led up out of the high grass of Illinois. He was a marvellous combination of intellectual power and of the sentiment of right. An English reporter who had come to this country expressly to ridicule Mr. Lincoln for an English paper (the London *Punch*) gave up at last his task, and confessed in a long, rich poem his poor estimate of the Western woodsman :

My shallow judgment I have learned to rue,
 Noting how to occasion's height he rose ;
 How his quaint wit made home-truth seem more true,
 How iron-like his temper grew by blows.

How humble, yet how hopeful, he could be ;
 How, in good fortune and in ill, the same ;
 Not bitter in success nor boastful he,
 Thirsty for gold nor feverish for fame.

He went about his work—such work as few
 Ever had laid on head or heart and hand—
 As one who knows when there's a task to do
 Man's honest will will heaven's good grace command.

* * * * * *

The words of mercy were upon his lips,
 Forgiveness in his heart and on his pen,
 When the red murderer brought a swift eclipse
 To thoughts of " peace on earth, good will to men."

The old world and the new from sea to sea
 Utter one voice of sympathy and shame ;
 Sore heart, so stopped when it at last beat high :
 Sad life, cut short just as its triumph came.

Great memory of our country, that in ten years after the death of Washington this child was opening its eyes upon a continent that was to make it a part of its second great drama!

So far is our day from the time of Washington that many details have fallen out of the picture, and there remains the form without the life. To the new generation that man, once called the "Saviour of His Country" and the "Father of His Country," has become as dead and cold as a marble statue of some ancient Greek or Roman. The calm forehead and noble face remain, but the human nature which still comes to us when the name of Lincoln is pronounced has fallen away. But this is not time's fault, it is the fault of the new generation; for God has made the mind such that it can recall past years and fill itself with living pictures. Nature offers no reward to mental indolence. It hates an idler in any field. If the passion for property has injured all love of literature, and if so far as literary taste remains it prefers a foolish novel to the greatest pages of history, certainly in such an age a few years will blot out scenes the most wonderful and events the most thrilling. The law of nature is that to the industrious mind pursuing the best paths, the past shall be made almost as vivid as the present. Not eighteen hundred years can destroy the picture of the living Jesus, a hundred years can not turn into dead rock the fathers of the Nation.

Man is the only animal to which nature has granted the power of seeing the past. The brute lives by the day; but each educated soul carries hundreds of years in the heart. Thus life is endeared, and the youth of twenty may seem to be living in a day thirty centuries in length. But all this landscape depends for its breadth and beauty upon the mind's activity. When one comes to the Mississippi one can see only a muddy stream, or he can behold that stream with

De Soto at its mouth and red men on its banks three hundred years ago; and when the same heart comes to the Potomac it may see only the fishing-boys and the negroes lying idly in the sun, or it may see Washington there in those days whose suns went down a hundred years before the sun of this sacred morning came. Man's present is only an hour or two, but when his mind is awakened the past and future are melted into the present, and make each passing hour great in its associations and hopes.

Not all minds may indeed possess the same power of recalling the past, but the common mental attributes are quite uniformly distributed, and few are the young persons of to-day who could not, if so they wished, recall the bygone times until they could hear the leaves rustle, in the autumn, under the foot of George Washington, could hear the axe of young Lincoln sounding afar in the lonely woods, could even see Jesus of Nazareth in his cottage in the Galilean hills or in the streets of Jerusalem. God made the soul too great to lie poised upon the present moment. It should rest upon the past and the future. But if the mind possesses no activity, or if its activity is exhausted upon transient and worthless literature the past falls out of life, and all the grand ones from the Divine Christ to the human Washington and Lincoln are only names without any meaning. Often are they made the subjects of ridicule or wit by hearts that have never measured the greatness of the lives for which the names stand. The philosophy of that revival of interest in the birthdays of our two greatest men is the hope that the new generation may grasp the past of the Nation and may pass from ignorance to knowledge and from silly ridicule to deep admiration.

One of the best lessons to be read from these two names is the warmth of their hearts. There was no indifference in

these characters. Great as their minds were, they were also powerful in their affections. Washington suffers now from the peculiar dignity of the old literary style. That style, perfected by Addison and Johnson, made a letter from friend to friend as pompous as a President's message or a King's address to a Parliament. Hamilton, George Washington, and Martha, each man and woman, used the style of Edmund Burke ; and a love letter read like an oration. But translating Washington's letters into the simple English of to-day, he is seen at once to have been a man of deep love, with his country one of the chief objects of his passion. The kindness and pathos of Mr. Lincoln are better seen because they are expressed in the dialect of our time, while the same qualities in Washington are toned down by the stateliness of the Miltonian English. When Washington had bidden good-by to LaFayette he followed the noble French patriot with a letter which shows the tenderness of the American's heart :

“In the moment of our separation, upon the road as we traveled and every hour since, I have felt all that love, respect and attachment for you with which length of years, close connection, and your merits have inspired me. I often asked myself, as our carriages separated, whether that was the last sight I should ever have of you. My fears answered yes. I called to mind the days of my youth that they had long fled to return no more ; that I was now descending the hill I had been fifty-two years in climbing, and that though I was blessed with a good constitution I was of a short-lived family, and might soon expect to be entombed in the mansion of my fathers. These thoughts darkened the shades and gave a gloom to the picture, and consequently to my prospects of seeing you again.”

Strip the letter of its stateliness and it recalls a tearful

carriage ride from Mt. Vernon to Annapolis. Washington and LaFayette journeying toward the harbor whence the great friend of freedom was to sail for France, riding along mile after mile in the Indian-summer of Maryland, make a picture which is easily filled with all the friendship and nobleness and pathos of the once real life. It does not ask for much imagination to make that good-by ride so near and real as to make the rattle of the carriages audible and the slow procession visible on a long hillside, and thus visible are the travelers.

It is of fresh memory that Mr. Lincoln was a man of unusual warmth of heart—a twofold reminder in these two names that our age asks for men not of vast wealth and of endless political acuteness, but men who can love the country and be once more as a father full of affection for all the household. Men without affection for their nation make citizens like Benedict Arnold, Aaron Burr, or the advocates of anarchy or political frauds. The country needs only those children who are capable of studying the great pages of history, and of forming tender attachments to all that is good in our National career. It is the evil of our day that the human heart has passed out of power, and that machine natures have attempted to fill up the tremendous vacancy. The treasury at Washington is full, but the Nation's heart is empty. The rights of the negro are not secured to him; the tremendous frauds of corporations are permitted to go on with a growing robbery of the people, and all because the love of the whole country is inactive, and men of great brain have displaced the men of large soul. This disease of the political heart is so infectious that we all are touched with its blight, and look upon our country as only a soulless corporation.

But our government is not a corporation. It is a vast family of dependent ones where hearts and hands should be

joined for mutual welfare. Washington and Lincoln being absent, the Congress and the President stand in *loco parentis*, and should carry onward all that old sympathy with the people which made all the old glory of our fathers. A colonial officer once wrote to Washington, suggesting that, in case independence were secured, they establish an American king; that the people could never rule. Washington quickly wrote to the young aristocrat never to speak or even think of such a result again—that the coming government must be that of the people. Thus was he the people's friend, and now that these States are occupied by fifty millions of people, the need of a friend has not undergone any decline. These millions are not rich, not powerful, they need a government which can secure to them "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."

That our country is not a cold corporation may be read from the peculiar concomitants in its progress. Our national hymns betray a national soul. Had the old East India Company any hymns? Has any corporation in our land any great dead? Any heroic graves, where students and benefactors stand to ponder and admire? Have these corporations any eloquence like that of Patrick Henry, Henry Clay, Daniel Webster, and of Lincoln at Gettysburg? Have they any self-denial like that of the soldiers who fell at "Yorktown" or in the Wilderness? Have they any poetry like "The Star Spangled Banner?" Have they any torn and riddled battle-flags? These words, a part of a vast hymn:

Oft o'er the seaman's or the soldier's bier
 Droops the dear banner for his glittering pall,
 Where every star might seem an angel's tear,
 And every stripe Christ's mercy covering all.

See from the rampart how the freshening breeze,
 Flings out that flag of splendor, where the Night
 Mingles with flaming Day its blazonies,
 And spreads its wavy azure, star-bedight.

Did ever the noblest corporation—the London Bank—did the meanest in the world ever fly such a holy banner, and compose such words of eulogy? Ah, no! our country is not a corporation; it is a sentiment also, like that which binds the inmates of a home all into one love through life and death.

Washington and Lincoln should stand as proofs forever that our Nation is a great beating heart, capable of many sorrows and a many-colored happiness, a great heart like that of a Jesus, which must embrace millions in its measureless affection, and love all equally. All the struggles and disappointments and labors of Washington, all the similar pains and tears of Lincoln tell us that when we come to the words “our country,” we have come to a living soul, that ought to be as omnipotent as the hand of God, as loving and pure as the heart of Jesus, the Son of God and of all humanity.

Washington came up from Virginia, Lincoln down from Illinois; both came in one spotless honor, in one self-denial, in one patience and labor, in one love of man; both came in the name of one simple Christianity; both breathing daily prayers to God; thus came, as though to picture a time when Virginia and Illinois, all the South and all the North would be alike one in works, in love, in religion, and in the details of National fame. If any of you young hearts have begun to forget your Nation and its heroes, you would better sit down by her rivers and remember your lost Zion, and weep as the old vision unveils itself, and then pray God to let your right hand forget its cunning rather than permit your soul to empty itself of your country.

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